

AD-A279 377



①

UNCLASSIFIED

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE  
Newport RI

WHAT LESSONS DOES THE BURMA CAMPAIGN HOLD? (U)

by

Mark E. Wheeler  
Major, U. S. Marine Corps

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature: M. E. Wheeler

8 February 1994

Paper directed by Captain H. Ward Clark  
Chairman, Department of Military Operations

This document has been approved  
for public release and sale; its  
distribution is unlimited.

DTIC  
ELECTE  
MAY 23 1994  
S F D

UNCLASSIFIED

94-15255



388

UNCLASSIFIED

94 5 20 05 2

## REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

1a REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION <b>UNCLASSIFIED</b>		1b RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS	
2a SECURITY CLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY		3 DISTRIBUTION AVAILABILITY OF REPORT DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A: APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE; DISTRIBUTION IS UNLIMITED.	
2b DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE		5 MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)	
4 PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)		5 MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)	
6a NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT	6b OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable) C	7a NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION	
6c ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) NAVAL WAR COLLEGE NEWPORT, R.I. 02841		7b ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)	
8a NAME OF FUNDING/SPONSORING ORGANIZATION	8b OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable)	9. PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER	
8c ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)		10 SOURCE OF FUNDING NUMBERS	
		PROGRAM ELEMENT NO.	PROJECT NO.
		TASK NO.	WORK UNIT ACCESSION NO.
11. TITLE (Include Security Classification) WHAT LESSONS DOES THE BURMA CAMPAIGN HOLD? (U)			
12 PERSONAL AUTHOR(S) MAJ MARK E. WHEELER, USMC			
13a TYPE OF REPORT FINAL	13b TIME COVERED FROM TO	14 DATE OF REPORT (Year, Month, Day) 8 FEB 94	15 PAGE COUNT 42
16 SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.			
17 COSATI CODES		18 SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)	
FIELD	GROUP	GEOGRAPHIC, STRATEGIC, AND OPERATIONAL SETTING	
		LAND FORCES; AIR FORCES; OFFENSIVE; LOGISTICS	
19 ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number) THE WWII BURMA CAMPAIGN WAS AN "ECONOMY OF FORCE" THEATER WHERE COMPETITION FOR SCARCE RESOURCES PRESENTED UNIQUE CHALLENGES TO OPERATIONAL PLANNERS. THE CAMPAIGN IS ANALYZED USING THE PRINCIPLES OF WAR AND OTHER OPERATIONAL CONCEPTS. ITS STUDY SHOWS THE CLOSE, OVERLAPPING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL OF WAR AND THE TACTICAL AND STRATEGIC LEVELS. THE CAMPAIGN DEMONSTRATES THE NEED FOR A WELL-ORGANIZED THEATER COMMAND STRUCTURE, THE DEPENDENCE OF WAR PLANS ON ALLIED COOPERATION AND SUPPORT, THE LIMITATIONS IMPOSED ON OPERATIONS BY INSUFFICIENT LOGISTICAL RESOURCES, AND THE EFFECT THAT ENEMY ACTION CAN HAVE ON PLANS. THE PROBLEMS OF RESOURCE ALLOCATION, FORCE APPORTIONMENT, AND COMMAND RELATIONSHIPS WILL CONTINUE TO PLAQUE MILITARY PLANNERS. THE LESSONS FROM THE BURMA CAMPAIGN ARE AS IMPORTANT AND RELEVANT TODAY AS THEY WERE IN WWII.			
20 DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNCLASSIFIED/UNLIMITED <input type="checkbox"/> SAME AS RPT <input type="checkbox"/> DTIC USERS		21 ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED	
22a NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL CHAIRMAN, OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT		22b TELEPHONE (Include Area Code) 841-3414	22c OFFICE SYMBOL C

Abstract of  
WHAT LESSONS DOES BURMA HOLD?

The World War II Burma Campaign was an "economy of force" theater where competition for scarce resources presented unique challenges to operational planners. The Campaign is analyzed using the Principles of War and other operational concepts. Its study shows the close, overlapping relationship between the operational level of war and the tactical and strategic levels. The campaign demonstrates the need for a well-organized theater command structure, the dependence of war plans on allied cooperation and support, the limitations imposed on operations by insufficient logistical resources, and the effect that enemy action can have on plans. The problems of resource allocation, force apportionment, and command relationships will continue to plague military planners. The lessons from the Burma Campaign are as important and relevant today as they were in World War II.

Accession For	
NTIS CRA&I	<input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/>
DTIC TAB	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unannounced	<input type="checkbox"/>
Justification .....	
By .....	
Distribution / .....	
Availability Codes	
Dist	Avail and/or Special
A-1	

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
ABSTRACT . . . . .	ii
I INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
II BACKGROUND . . . . .	3
Geographic Setting . . . . .	3
Strategic Setting . . . . .	3
Operational Setting . . . . .	4
III CREATING A THEATER OF WAR . . . . .	7
War Aims . . . . .	7
Development of an Immature Theater . . . . .	7
Land Forces . . . . .	8
Air Forces . . . . .	9
Taking the Offensive . . . . .	10
IV WAR PLANS . . . . .	11
Initial Plan . . . . .	11
The Modified Plan . . . . .	12
Decisive Engagements . . . . .	13
Logistics and Operational Plans . . . . .	15
V CONCLUSION . . . . .	18
NOTES . . . . .	21
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	23
APPENDIX <sup>1</sup> I--MAPS . . . . .	24
II--CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS . . . . .	36
III--CHAIN OF COMMAND: 14 DECEMBER 1943 . . . . .	37
IV--CHAIN OF COMMAND: 12 NOVEMBER 1944 . . . . .	38
V--CHAIN OF COMMAND: 1 JUNE 1945 . . . . .	39

# WHAT LESSONS DOES THE BURMA CAMPAIGN HOLD?

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

When asked about World War II, most military scholars easily recall the operations that took place in the North African, European or Pacific Theaters. However, seldom does one hear much about the remote campaign that took place in the South-East Asian Theater - the Burma Campaign. Although mostly ignored or forgotten, the campaign in Burma was arguably one of the most complex and demanding campaigns of World War II. Last priority in the overall war effort, the Burma Campaign, nicknamed "the forgotten front" and "the shoe-string theater", offers significant lessons for those who today study the operational art.

In the World War II setting, Burma was an economy of force theater in the truest sense. Allied efforts in Europe and the Pacific would eclipse Burma in all respects, especially in the competition for scarce resources. This was to have grave consequences for the operational planners.

If any campaign can demonstrate the need for a well-organized theater command structure, the dependence of war plans on allied cooperation and support, the limitations imposed on operations by insufficient logistical resources, and the effect on your plans by enemy interaction, the Burma Campaign can.

Although the Japanese first invaded Burma on 16 Jan 1942, this analysis will concentrate primarily on the period between the Allied Combined Chiefs of Staff decision to establish the South East Asian Theater until the end of the fighting in Burma (August 1943 - August 1945).

This paper attempts to give some insight into the Burma Campaign by using the Principles of War and other operational concepts as the tools for analysis. A detailed accounting of the campaign is outside the scope of this paper. The general conduct of operations can best be sensed by viewing the maps provided (Appendix I).

## CHAPTER II

### BACKGROUND

Geographic Setting. Before continuing, we must first place the Burma Campaign into perspective. The terrain and climate of Burma placed greater limitations on operations than in other theaters. The Burmese terrain is extremely broken and overly compartmented with limited, mostly fair-weather lines of communication running along north-south axes through the major river valleys (Map 5). Very few roads cut across the frontier. The monsoon season, extending from May into October, brought ground movement almost to a halt. This limited the annual campaign season to essentially the period from November through May. Burma is also one of the most unhealthy spots in the world. Much of the country, and especially the river valleys were dangerously infested by malaria and scrub typhus. These conditions resulted in more casualties to Lieutenant General Slim's 14th Army from disease than from battle injuries. These environmental factors imposed limitations to sustaining an army in the field and were not easily overcome. They also affected the morale of the army.<sup>2</sup>

Strategic Setting. Why was Burma so important? What caused the Allied Combined Chiefs of Staff to establish a separate theater of war and fight a major campaign there? The answer becomes pretty clear when looking at the overall

strategic scheme of World War II (Appendix II).

On 15 January 1942, the Japanese invaded Burma, and by mid-May 1942, they had successfully pushed the British Army up through the Central Burma Plain, beyond the Chindwin River, and into the Indo-Burmese frontier. In the process the Burma Road was cut.<sup>3</sup> Losing the Burma Road was potentially devastating to the overall war effort against Japan since this was the single overland supply route into Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's Chinese Army. Without American support via the Burma Road, China could not hope to survive in the war against Japan. China's importance went well beyond that of simply an alliance/coalition relationship. Chiang Kai-shek's forces tied down almost a third of the entire Japanese Army.<sup>4</sup>

The United States's upcoming offensive drive across the Pacific in 1944 stood much greater prospects for success if the Japanese Army were fully committed in other theaters. This would force Japan to operate on widely divergent lines of operation, while the U.S. Pacific force operated on single lines of operation. As a result, the Americans, determined to keep China in the war, began to dedicate increasing assets toward supplying China by air via the "HUMP" route over the Himalayan foothills.<sup>5</sup>

Operational Setting. In December 1942, the British attempted a counter-offensive in the Arakan. The offensive was severely beaten back. Another attempt to strike the Japanese occurred during February to May 1943, when Major



General Wingate's First Chindit Expedition using long-range penetration techniques, infiltrated into Central Burma to disrupt the Japanese lines of communication. The Chindits were able to cut rail lines and harass the Japanese, but their efforts did not achieve operationally significant results. They returned to the Indo-Burmese frontier exhausted and weak. The British, possessing insufficient resources, were unable to mass sufficient combat power to bring about a decisive balance of forces. Although these early efforts did not have much impact on the Japanese forces, it did cause the Japanese to reevaluate their strategy in Burma.<sup>6</sup>

During 1943, the Japanese high command became concerned with the pinprick attacks against them by the First Chindit Expedition and were determined to neutralize British attempts at any future offensives. The Japanese crafted their U-GO (Grand Design) plan with the aim to decisively engage and destroy the British advance base in the Assam area (Maps 12, 13, and 16). To accompany this main offensive the Japanese planned a supporting attack in the Arakan, the HA-GO plan, to draw enemy forces away from their main effort in Assam. This provided the interaction of opposing forces that would prove fatal to the Japanese in 1944 (See Chapter IV).<sup>7</sup>

After the 1943 campaign season, morale of the British forces were at an all-time low. It appeared that the Japanese Army was invincible and that India might be at risk of invasion. The British were simply not capable of launching a

major counter-offensive in Burma. However, several lessons were learned from these early operations that were to have a dramatic operational effect in the 1944-5 offensive.

First, the British uncovered a critical vulnerability in the Japanese logistic system. Although the Japanese could move large forces quickly through the jungle to encircle and cut their opponent's lines of communication, they had little ability to sustain themselves for any duration. Second, the Japanese proved to be inflexible and incapable of adapting to rapidly changing situations. Third, the Chindit Expedition showed that large forces could be sustained by air resupply rather than being dependent solely upon overland transportation routes.<sup>8</sup>

## CHAPTER III

### CREATING A THEATER OF WAR

War Aims. The British and Americans Chiefs of Staff held differing views about future operations in Burma. The British believed that Southern Burma (Rangoon) would have to be captured in order to defend the HUMP route against Japanese air attacks, as well as to provide a staging base and port capable of supporting continued operations in Upper Burma and future amphibious operations against Malaya and Singapore. The Americans, however, were initially only willing to commit sufficient resources to open and expand the Burma Road.'

The British view reflected a more realistic picture of the situation in Burma. They better appreciated the problems associated with sustaining an army in Northern Burma without access to the more extensive lines of communication running from Rangoon through Central Burma. In retrospect it seems that the American Joint Chiefs had a better understanding of the strategic problems presented by limited resources, especially amphibious shipping.

Development of an Immature Theater. In August 1943, the Combined Chiefs of Staff established a new theater of war, the South East Asia Command (SEAC), under the command of British Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten. Resources for future operations were allocated. No command infrastructure existed in the theater at the time and basing facilities were

extremely limited.

The SEAC headquarters was to be a combined-joint staff of army, air and naval services with both British and American representation. Mountbatten intended to exercise his role of Supreme Allied Commander through three service commanders-in-chief (air, naval, and land). This simple command structure would have allowed Mountbatten to direct the overall theater strategy while the CINCs supervised the conduct of near-term operations. However, in practice the command relationships were much more complicated. Appendix III depicts the command relationships as they existed in December 1943.

Although Mountbatten exercised supreme command as the theater CINC, his subordinate command relationships were complicated by the presence of the American Lieutenant General Stilwell and Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. Stilwell, more senior than the other generals in the theater, held a rather unique and encumbering position. He was appointed as Mountbatten's Deputy SEAC Commander; was posted as Chief of Staff to Chiang Kai-shek; was designated as Commanding General, U.S. China-Burma-India Theater; and because Chiang Kai-shek refused to allow his Chinese forces to serve under the command of any general other than Stilwell, he functioned operationally as Commanding General, Northern Combat Area Command (NCAC). Moreover, Chiang Kai-shek retained direct authority over the Yunnan Chinese Expeditionary Force (CEF).

Land Forces. Mountbatten expected to organize all land

forces under one CINC, British General Giffard, but Stilwell absolutely refused to serve under Giffard's command. A compromise was finally reached whereby Stilwell agreed to place NCAC under the operational control Lieutenant General Slim's 14th Army. Through this arrangement unity of command for all Allied ground forces was established.<sup>10</sup> This command arrangement continued until Stilwell's recall to the U.S. in October 1944. At that time, Mountbatten immediately reorganized the ground forces to a more simple command relationship (Appendix IV).

Air Forces. A similar encumbrance initially plagued the air forces command relationship in November 1943. Stilwell, in his role of Commanding General, U.S. China-Burma-India Theater, exercised authority over all U.S. air forces. In order to task the American air formations, Mountbatten had to issue orders to them through Stilwell. This proved an unworkable situation. After an incident in early December 1943, Mountbatten immediately issued orders to reorganize all Allied air forces directly under the Allied Air Forces CINC, British Air Chief Marshall Peirse.

The benefits of this realignment were enormous. The key advantages came from the creation of separate strategic, tactical, and air transport formations. These new formations were more flexible and were better adapted to support directly the army air transport and close fire support requirements. Plus, the strategic formation provided forces capable of

delivering deep operational fires against the Japanese air forces and lines of supply.<sup>11</sup>

Taking The Offensive. Upon taking command, Mountbatten was determined to maintain the offensive throughout the difficult monsoon season. In order to do this he had to overcome the logistical and morale problems that afflicted the army.

Mountbatten set up a Medical Advisory Division within the SEAC headquarters to combat the problems associated with the disease-ridden environment. This organization to helped reduce the sickness rates from 1850 per 1000 in 1942, to 500 per 1000 in 1945. Other actions included steps taken to improve casualty evacuation procedures.<sup>12</sup>

A theater-wide newspaper was established, and together with the improvement in health procedures, morale and the fighting quality of the army quickly improved. Solid leadership and troop welfare programs were a significant measure contributing to force protection and led to an increase in overall combat power.

## CHAPTER IV

### WAR PLANS

Initial Plan. Mountbatten was given two major objectives to achieve.

"Firstly, the enemy was to be engaged as closely and continuously as possible, and his forces (especially his air forces) worn down so that he would be compelled to divert reinforcements from the Pacific theatre. Secondly, but of no less importance, I was to maintain and enlarge our contacts with China, both by the air route, and by making direct contact in Northern Burma by the use (amongst other methods) of suitably organised, air-supplied ground forces of the greatest possible strength...."<sup>13</sup>

This guidance provided the basis for all operational planning in the theater. In November 1943, the SEAC war plan included seven separate, but related operations for the 1944 campaign season.

a. Operation BUCCANEER - an amphibious assault to capture the Andaman Islands (33 Corps, naval, and naval air support)

b. An advance on the Arakan front, and eventually an amphibious assault to capture Akyab (15 Corps, 224 Group RAF)

c. An advance on the Central front across the Chindwin River (4 Corps, 221 Group RAF)

d. An advance by the NCAC force down the Hukawng Valley to secure the trace of the Ledo (Burma) Road into China (Stilwell's Chinese Army, Northern Air Sector Force)

e. An advance from Yunnan to secure the Chinese end of the Ledo Road (CEF, 14th U.S. Air Force)

f. Special operations in support of NCAC and CEF (Wingate's Special Force (Chindits), No. 1 Air Commando and the Third Tactical Air Force)

g. Capture of the airfield at Rail Indaw by parachute forces and fly-in of an airborne brigade in support

of Special Force (50 Parachute Brigade and 26 Indian Division, Troop Carrier Command)<sup>14</sup>

These seven operations, when executed together, would serve to mass the forces of Stilwell on the NCAC front (Maps 9, 15 and 19), those of Slim on the Central front, and the CEF from Yunnan for a decisive thrust into Upper Burma with the purpose of rapidly opening the Burma Road. The remaining operations served as an economy of force effort to prevent the Japanese from being able to concentrate their forces at the decisive point (in the North-Central Burma area) or were designed to disrupt the enemy lines of communication. Note that each operation was a joint venture between air, ground, and in two cases, naval forces. This well-synchronized plan took maximum advantage of the exterior lines afforded by the innovation of air resupply, while it prevented the Japanese from taking advantage of their interior lines.

The Modified Plan. However, the scheme was not to be executed as planned. On 5 December 1943, the Combined Chiefs of Staff issued a directive cancelling the previously promised amphibious shipping. In addition, SEAC was ordered to send over half of their organic amphibious shipping resources to Europe for the OVERLORD landings. BUCCANEER (a) had to be cancelled.<sup>15</sup>

This had severe repercussions since Chiang Kai-shek had made the CEF advance from Yunnan contingent upon a major allied amphibious operation being launched simultaneously in



Southern Burma.

The Allies attempted to substitute a smaller amphibious assault (PIGSTICK) behind the Japanese lines on the southern portion of the Mayu Peninsula. However, Chiang Kai-shek refused to accept PIGSTICK as meeting his precondition withdrew his consent for the CEF advance (e). Without the advance by the CEF, the parachute operation to capture the Rail Indaw airfield (g) was too risky, and it too had to be cancelled. Only four of the seven original operations (b, c, d and f) were now feasible.<sup>16</sup>

This is a prime example showing the fragility of war plans that are based upon the cooperation of a coalition partner. It also illustrates the severe impact that a scarcity of resources, imposed by strategic decisions, can have on operational planning. Fortunately, the SEAC plan was robust enough that the remaining four operations could accomplish the same objective, albeit with a less decisive massing of combat power.

Decisive Engagements. The earlier mentioned Japanese HA-GO offensive coincided with the 15 Corps attack in the Arakan. The 15 Corps held its ground, relying upon air resupply to sustain itself. This technique proved to be an effect counter to the Japanese encirclement tactics. The Japanese forces, unable to endure sustained operations, were decisively beaten. This quick decision in the Arakan allowed several British divisions to be disengaged early. Slim used transport

aircraft to rapidly shift these newly available divisions to the Imphal/ Kohima Plain. Air mobility allowed him to use superior speed and maneuver to mass his forces for a decisive defense against the U-GO offensive.<sup>17</sup>

Throughout the campaign General Slim, believing in the principle of the offensive, sought the decisive engagement. He selected critical objectives that he believed would create a situation favorable to his force and unfavorable to the enemy. On two occasions he was able to create the conditions whereby the Japanese were defeated on such a scale that it turned the course of the campaign. Both occasions demonstrated the superior ability of the Allies to rapidly maneuver combat forces and mass them at the decisive point.

The first occurred on the Kohima-Imphal Plain during the 1944 campaign season against the U-GO offensive. As mentioned above, Slim massed his forces and fought a successful, decisive defensive engagement. Reinforcing and resupplying by air, he held out until the Japanese went beyond the culminating point. The exhausted, almost shattered, Japanese troops were forced to withdraw when the monsoon season began. At this point the tide turned against Japan, and the Allied force transitioned to the offensive. They would keep the initiative for the remainder of the campaign.

The second occasion occurred during Slim's attack across the Irrawaddy River near the Mandalay-Meiktila area in Central Burma (Maps 26, 29, and 32). Here, Slim orchestrated

a brilliant deception plan that encircled the main Japanese force and contributed directly to the rapidly deteriorating Japanese position. Slim positioned the 19th Indian Division on the Irrawaddy north of Mandalay to deceive the Japanese as to his true intentions. While his enemy attempted to mass forces to meet the obvious threat to Mandalay Slim, concentrated his main effort, the mobile armored/mechanized forces of the 7th Indian Division, southwest of Mandalay and launched the decisive surprise thrust toward Meiktila. Here again, the Japanese exhausted themselves by continued attacks against a superior enemy force. They also proved to be unable to adapt from their previously successful jungle tactics to the highly mobile conditions on the Central Plain.<sup>18</sup>

In the three situations described (the Arakan, the Imphal Plain, and the area around Mandalay-Meiktila), the Japanese showed the inability to react to changing conditions or to abandon an obviously unsuccessful course of action. Because of this they repeatedly wasted their combat strength in conditions unfavorable to victory. The final action involved a race to Rangoon, not against the Japanese, but against the approaching monsoon.

Logistics and Operational Plans. Because of the poor lines of communication, Mountbatten made the decision to depend almost entirely on air resupply to sustain the army. This placed tremendous strain on the air transport formations. Further, it influenced the course of operational planning. As

the 14th Army approached Central Burma it reached the extreme range its transport aircraft (Map 24). This meant that advance air bases would have to be seized in order to continue the offensive to Rangoon. Therefore, Mountbatten directed that operations take place in the Arakan to secure airfields at Akyab and Kyaukpyu. This would extend the aircraft operating range to cover the final drive on Rangoon.'

Another operational constraint imposed by logistics came from the limited number of transport aircraft. There was not enough transport capacity to adequately supply the entire army by air alone. Ground combat units not absolutely required to support the main effort had to be evacuated and relocated to areas where they were not dependent on air resupply. This economy of force measure allowed the transport aircraft to support the more critical main army force.

As the monsoon season of 1945 approached, a critical decision point arrived where Mountbatten had to make the decision on whether or not to launch an amphibious assault on Rangoon. Initially, the SEAC war planners felt that an assault on Rangoon would not be needed. It appeared that the army would be able to capture Rangoon before the monsoon started. However, here again, Chiang Kai-shek disrupted the plan. Because of a major Japanese offensive in China, he demanded the return of the Chinese divisions assigned to NCAC. Since Northern Burma was now secure Mountbatten agreed, but the critical timetable for the capture of Rangoon was in

jeopardy. British Lieutenant General Leese, CINC of the recently reorganized Allied Land Forces SEAC, recommended a last minute, scaled-down amphibious assault against Rangoon. This recommendation was made almost exclusively out of concern that the army could not be sustained entirely by air once the monsoon rains started.<sup>20</sup>

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

The Burma case study provides a great number of recurring lessons. They are as important and relevant today as they were in World War II. Here also, we can see the close, overlapping relationship between the operational level of war and the tactical and strategic levels. The more significant lessons from Burma are summarized below.

- Successfully attacking your enemy's critical vulnerabilities can bring about decisive results. Your main effort should be aimed toward exploiting these critical vulnerabilities. Hence, if your enemy's center of gravity is his army, look to attack those things that allow him to function effectively (i.e., supply lines, command and control nodes, air support, doctrine, etc.)

- Development of an immature theater presents tremendous challenges. Unity of command helps to ensure a continuity of effort; simple command relationships should be arranged and agreed upon as soon as possible. Complicated relationships should be simplified as soon as practical.

- Cooperation among allies can be problematic, particularly when the partners have different objectives. Operation plans grouped within a campaign plan should be developed well enough for each to stand alone. Fragile plans can collapse.

- Operations and logistics plans are interdependent. The effects of one on the other must be considered before commencing operations. Operations to seize advance logistics bases or better lines of communication may be required in order to sustain combat forces. Plans designed with a full appreciation of logistics can increase the time it takes to reach the culminating point.

- Economy of force operations can help to prevent the enemy from concentrating his forces while you choose the decisive time and place at which to mass yours. A commander employing this technique might be able to create the conditions for a decisive engagement. However, care must be taken when allocating resources so that the lesser force is not placed at too great a risk.

- It is important to always consider the effect that enemy actions can have on your plans; plans that are dependent on a cooperative adversary can be easily upset.

- Joint operations featuring forces capable of combined-arms integration can often result in more decisive results than when each is employed independently.

- Forces that can be rapidly transported by air are capability of exploiting the principles of maneuver and mass, economy of force, and surprise.

The Burma Campaign deserves more study. Our current national military strategy requires the ability to fight two

major regional contingencies simultaneously. As our military force structure grows smaller, it is quite possible that some future conflict may require an economy of force effort in one theater while decisive action is taken in another. The problems of resource allocation, force apportionment, and command relationships will continue to plague military planners. There are still lessons to learn; better to learn them now, through a study of history, rather than in the midst of some future crisis.



## NOTES

1. VADM Lord Louis Mountbatten, Report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff by the Supreme Allied Commander: South-east Asia, 1943-45 (London: HMSO, 1951), all maps and diagrams were taken from various pages in the text.
2. Field Marshall Viscount Slim, Defeat Into Victory (Hong Kong: Papermac, 1986), p. 168-181.
3. Peter Young, A Short History of World War II, 1939-1945 (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1966), p. 183-187.
4. Geoffrey Matthews, The Re-Conquest of Burma 1943-1945 (Aldershot: Gale & Polden Limited, 1966), p. 4-6.
5. Ibid.
6. E.D. Smith, Battle For Burma (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1979), p. 45-48.
7. Japanese Monograph No. 132, Burma Operations Record: 28th Army Operations in Akyab Area, Rev. 1958 (Washington: Department of the Army, 1958), p. 1-3; and Japanese Monograph No. 134, Burma Operations Record: 33d Army Operations, Revised Edition (Washington: Department of the Army, 1957), p. 27-39.
8. Matthews, p. 17-20.
9. Ibid, p. 6-7.
10. Slim, p. 205-208.
11. Mountbatten, p. 28-29.
12. Ibid, p. 246-251.
13. Mountbatten, p. 26.
14. Ibid, p. 27.
15. Ibid, p. 29.
16. Matthews, p. 11-12; and Mountbatten, p. 29-30.
17. Slim, p. 296-346.
18. Basil Collier, The War in the Far East: 1941-1945 (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1969), p. 431-435.

19. Mountbatten, p. 124.

20. Ibid, p. 122; and 145-146.

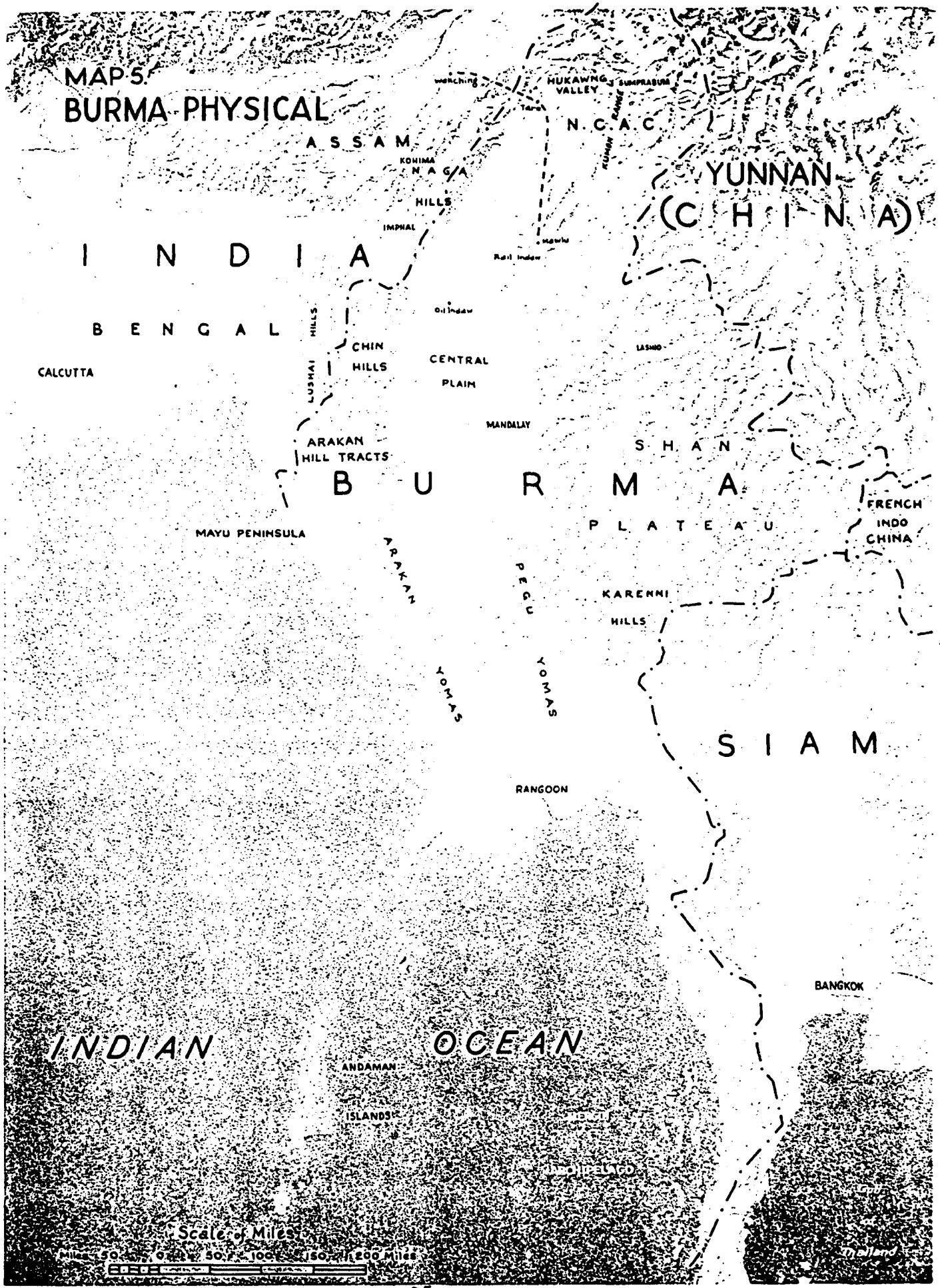
## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Calvocoressi, Peter and Wint, Guy. Total War: Causes and Courses of the Second World War. New York: Penguin Books, 1979.
- Collier, Basil. The War in the Far East: 1941-1945. New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1969.
- Jacobsen, Mark. "Winston Churchill and the Third Front." Journal of Strategic Studies, September 1991, pp. 337-362.
- Keegan, John. The Second World War. New York: Viking, 1990.
- Matthews, Geoffrey. The Re-Conquest of Burma 1943-1945. Aldershot: Gale & Polden Limited, 1966.
- Matloff, Maurice, ed. American Military History. Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, Dept of the Army, 1959.
- Mountbatten, VADM Lord Louis. Report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff by the Supreme Allied Commander: South-east Asia, 1943-1945. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1951.
- Slim, Field-Marshal Viscount. Defeat into Victory. Hong Kong: Papermac, 1986.
- Smith, E.D. Battle for Burma. New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1979.
- Willmott, H.P. Empires in the Balance: Japanese and Allied Pacific Strategies to April 1942. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1982.
- Young, Peter. A Short History of World War II 1939-1945. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1966.
- Japanese Monograph No. 132. Burma Operations Record: 28th Army Operations in Akyab Area (Rev Ed). Washington: Department of the Army, 1958.
- Japanese Monograph No. 134. Burma Operations Record: 15th Army Operations in Imphal Area and Withdrawal to Northern Burma (Rev Ed). Washington: Department of the Army, 1957.
- Japanese Monograph No. 148. Burma Operations Record: 33d Army Operations. Washington: Department of the Army.

**APPENDIX I**

**MAPS**

MAP 5  
BURMA PHYSICAL



MAP 12

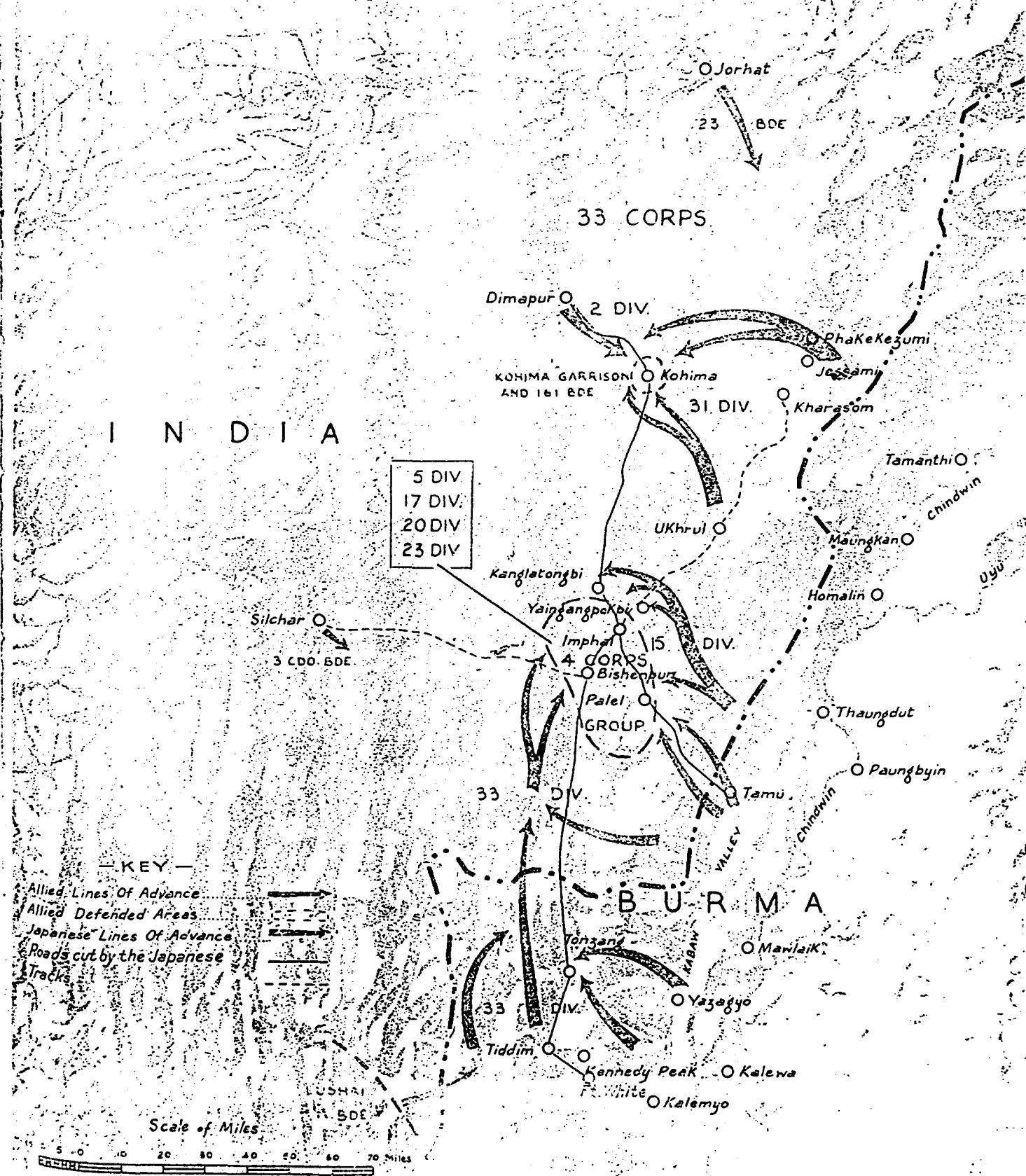
14 MARCH 1944



# ATTEMPTED INVASION OF INDIA — DEVELOPMENT OF PHASE 2

APRIL — 1944

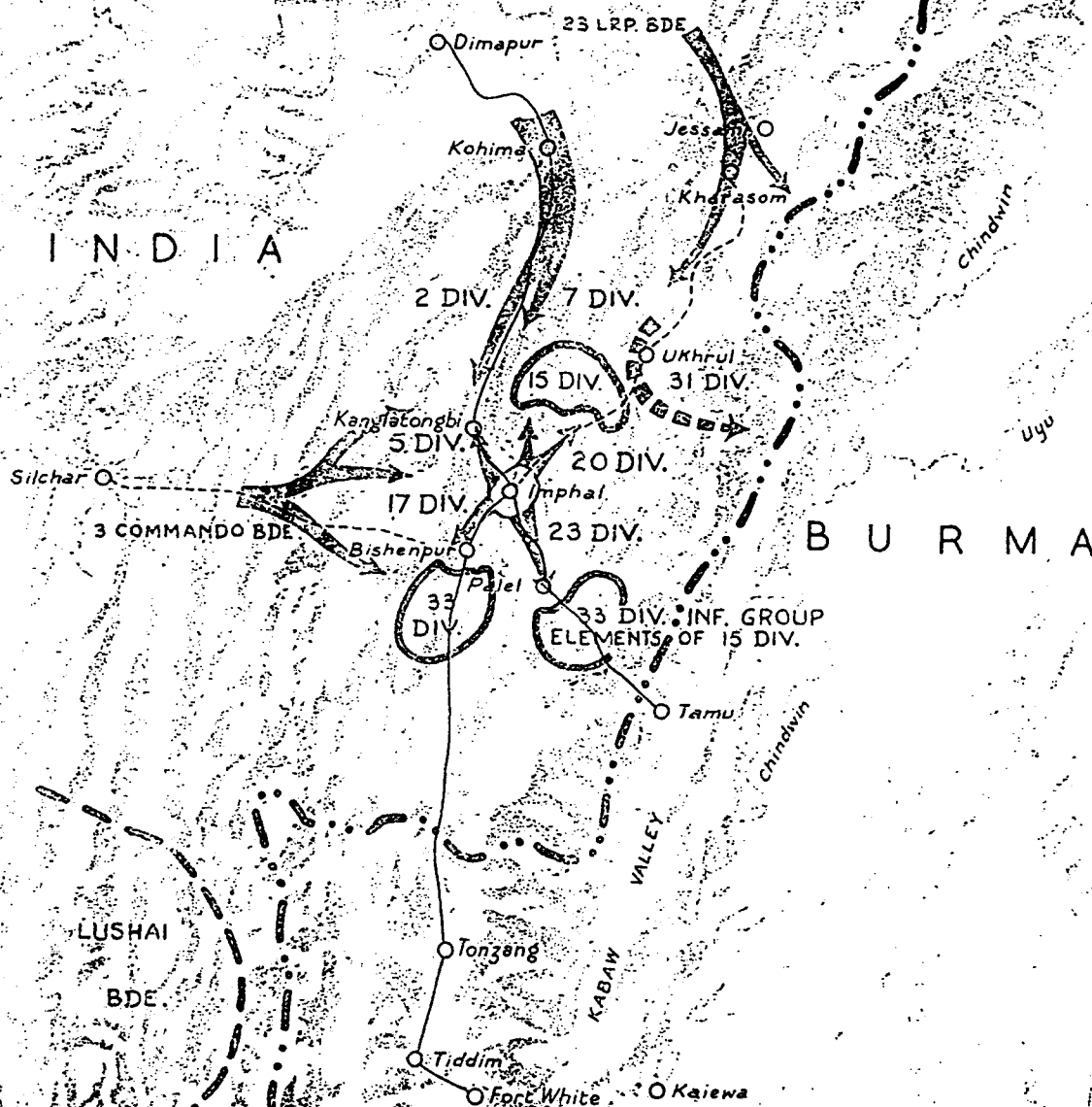
MAP 13



# COUNTER-OFFENSIVE ON THE CENTRAL FRONT

## MAP 16

MAY — JUNE 1944

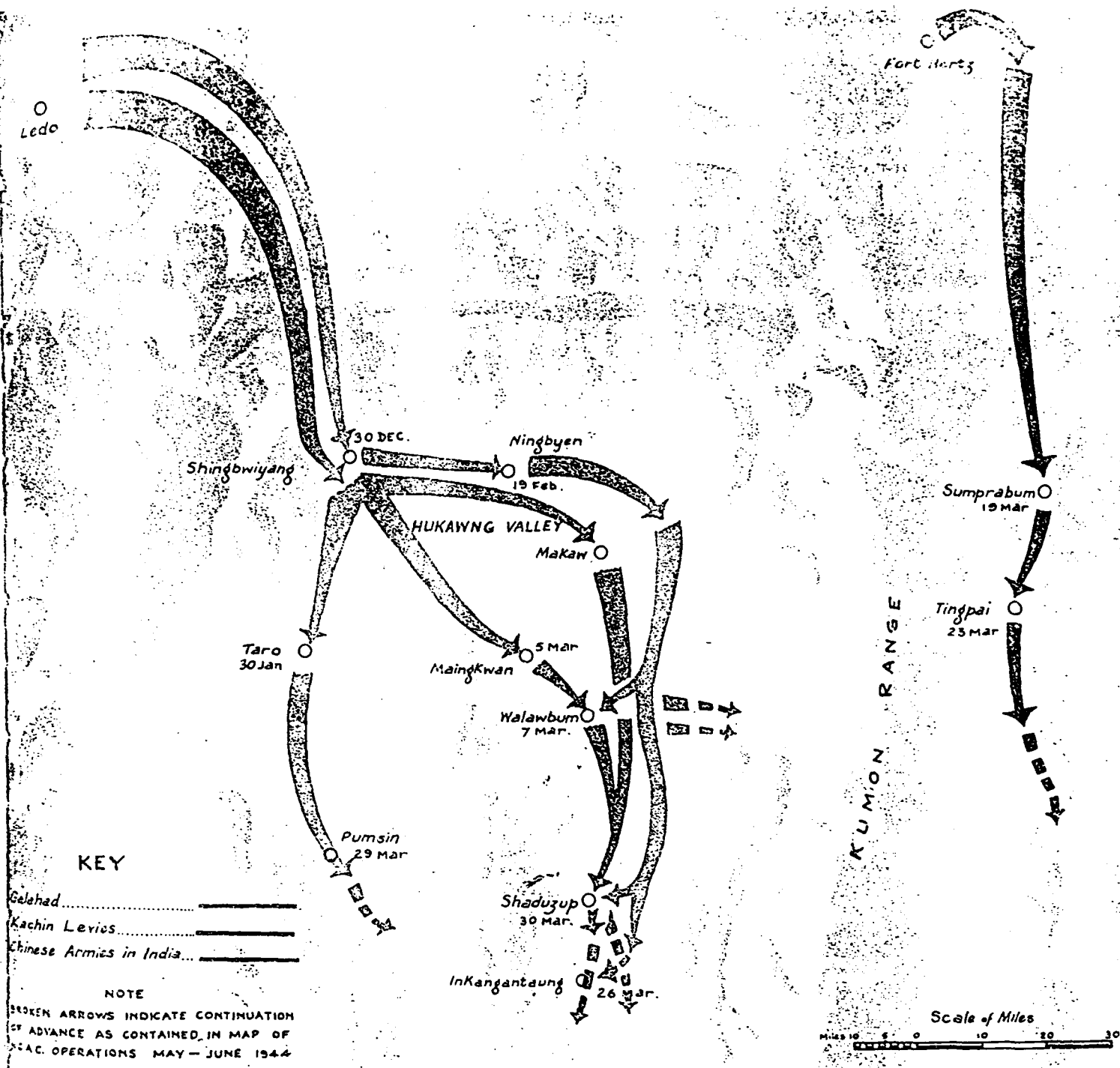


### KEY

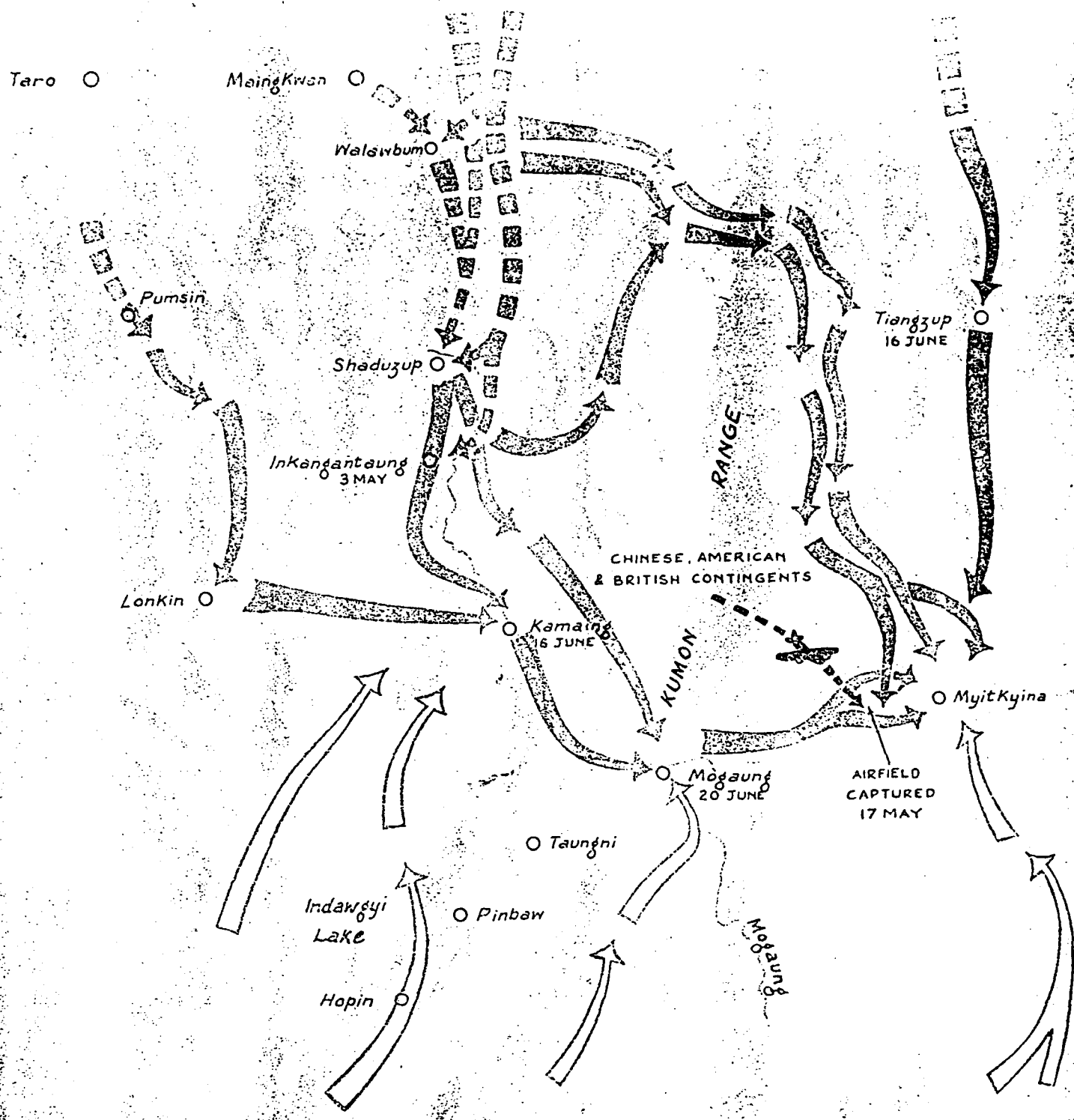
- Allied Lines Of Advance.....
- Japanese Withdrawals.....
- Japanese Concentration Areas.....
- Roads cut by the Japanese.....
- Tracks cut by the Japanese.....

MILES 10 5 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 Miles





MAP 9. N.C.A.C. OPERATIONS  
NOVEMBER 1943 — MARCH 1944



# MAP 15. N. C. A. C. OPERATIONS

APRIL 1—JUNE 30 1944

NOTE: Broken Arrows indicate Line of Advance Leading up to this Period.

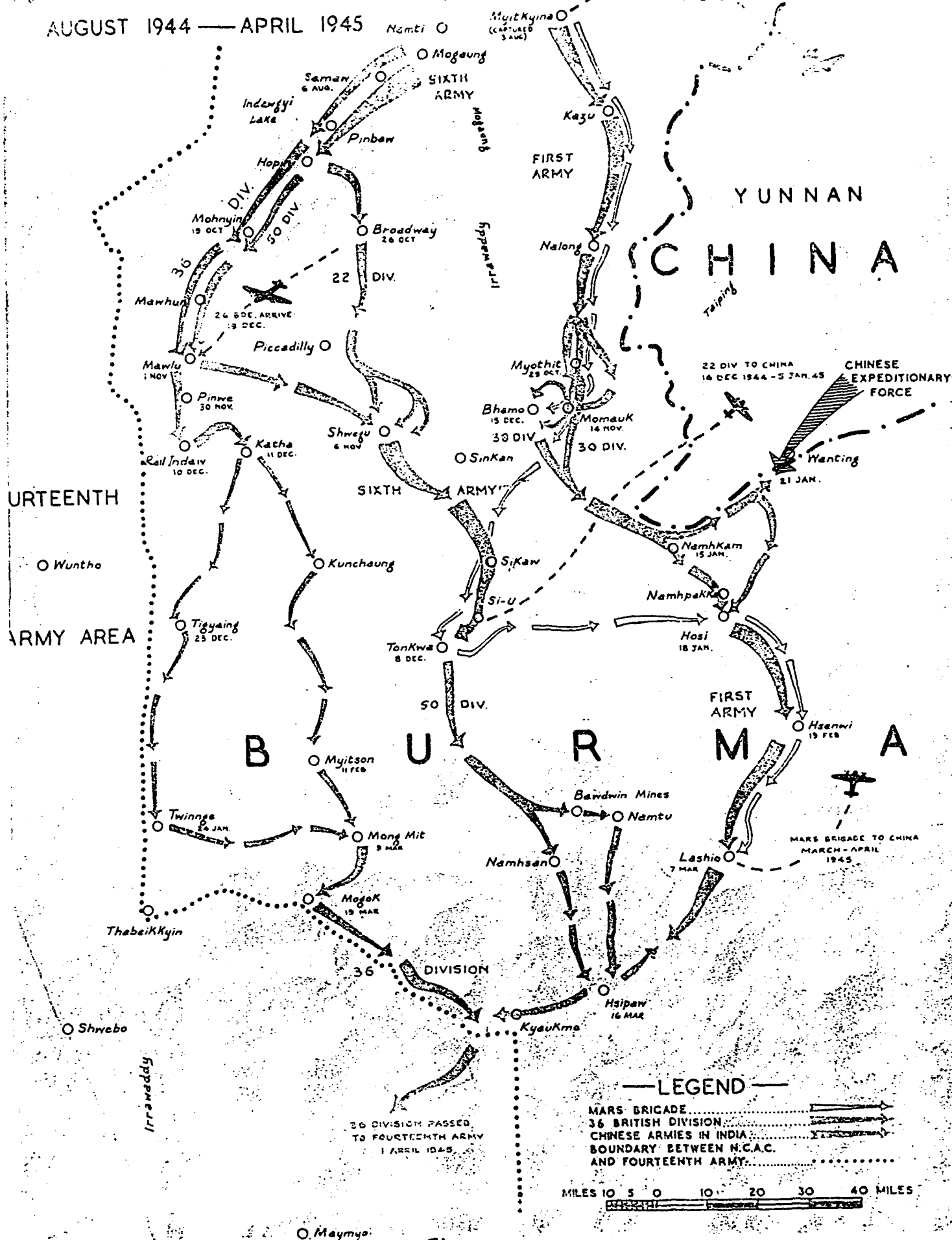
## KEY

- Chinese Armies in India.....
- Galahad.....
- Kachin Levies.....
- Special Force.....

# N.C.A.C. OPERATIONS (MAP 19)

AUGUST 1944 — APRIL 1945

1:250,000  
S-24 CEC



Map 26. THE SOUTHERN CROSSINGS OF THE IRRAWADDY

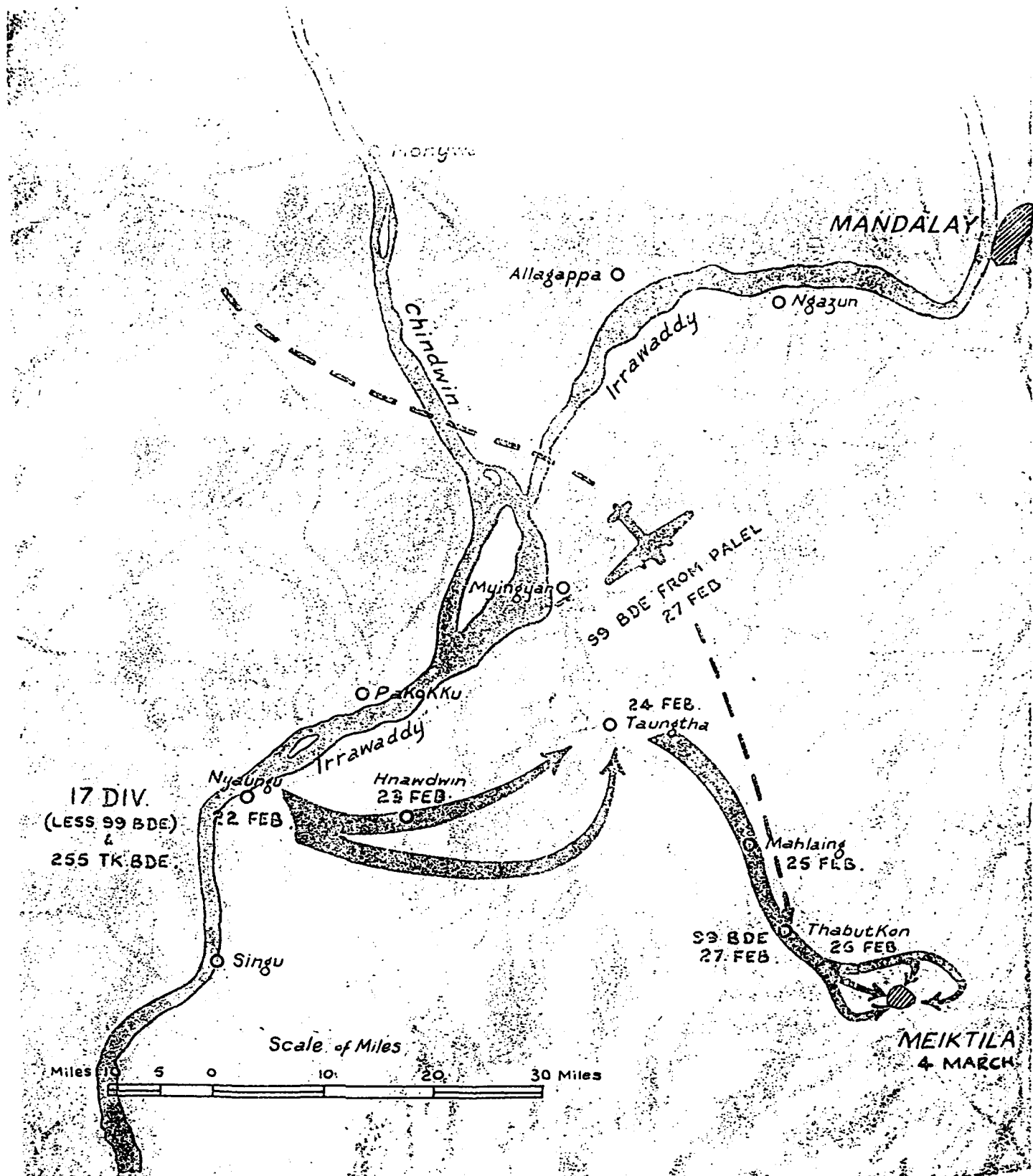
Legend:

- CROSSINGS (indicated by a solid arrow)
- FEINT CROSSINGS (indicated by a dashed arrow)

Key locations and movements:

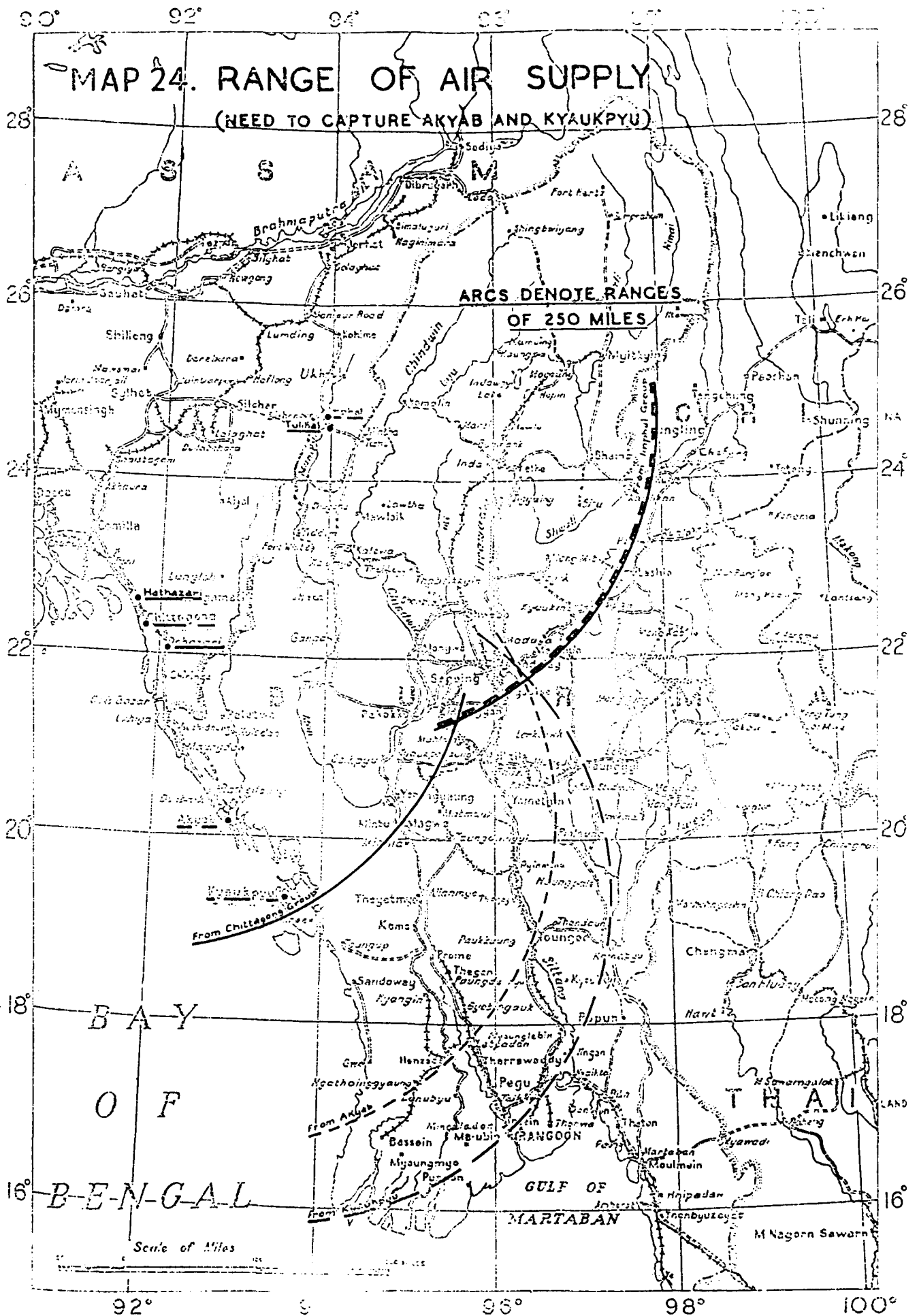
- 33 CORPS:**
  - 19 IND DIV: Thabeikkyin (14 Jan 45), Kyaukmyaung (14 Jan 45)
  - 20 IND DIV: Monywa (12 Feb 45), Allagappa (12 Feb 45)
  - 2-BRIT DIV: Myingyan (24 Feb 45)
- 4 CORPS:**
  - 7 IND DIV: Pagan (13 Feb 45), Chauk (13 Feb 45)
  - 28 (E.A.) BDE: Seikpyu (13 Feb 45)
  - 17 IND DIV: Pauk (18 Feb 45)

Scale of Miles: 0, 10, 20, 30



MAP 29. ASSAULT ON MEIKTILA

[illegible]



## APPENDIX II

### CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

#### 1942

- |         |  |
|---------|--|
| 15Jan   | - Japan invades Burma                                  |
| 9Mar    | - Rangoon falls to Japan                               |
| May     | - Allies driven across Chindwin to Indo-Burmese border |
| Dec     | - First British Arakan offensive                       |
| Feb-May | - First Chindit expedition                             |

#### 1943

- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| Jun-Jul | - The Central Solomons Campaign             |
| Aug     | - SEAC set up by QUADRANT conference        |
| Nov     | - British limited advance in Arakan         |
| Nov     | - Tarawa                                    |
| 11Dec   | - SEAC Allied Air Command under single CINC |

#### 1944

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 7-21Feb     | - Kwajalein/Guadalcanal cleared/Eniwetok        |
| 3Feb-May    | - Japanese Arakan offensive (HA-GO)             |
| 5Mar        | - Second Chindit expedition                     |
| 6Mar-19Aug  | - Japanese U-GO (Assam) offensive               |
| 7Apr        | - Siege of Kohima                               |
| 17Apr       | - Japanese ICHI-GO offensive commences in China |
| 10-11May    | - CEF crosses Salween River from Yunnan         |
| 7Jun        | - Japanese retreat from Imphal/Kohima           |
| 19-20Jun    | - Battle of the Philippine Sea                  |
| 15Jun-8Aug  | - Saipan / Tinian / Guam                        |
| 15Sep-24Nov | - Peleliu                                       |
| 20Oct       | - Leyte Gulf landing                            |
| 21Oct       | - Stilwell recalled to US                       |
| 10Dec       | - Two NCAC Chinese divisions recalled to China  |

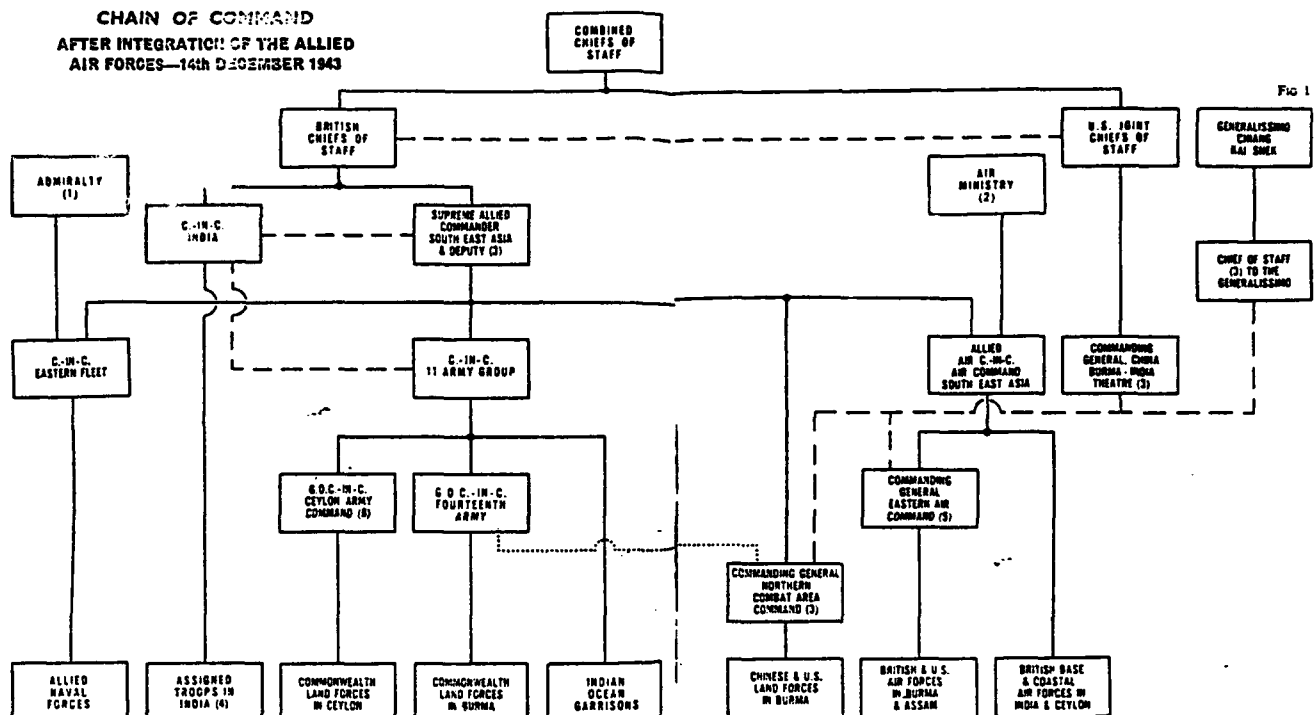
#### 1945

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| 7Jan       | - Ledo Road completed  |
| 23Feb      | - Last date for DRACULA decision passes  |
| 28Feb-4Mar | - Meiktila taken by 14th Army  |
| Mar        | - NCAC achieves objectives, SEAC agrees to return remaining divisions to China |
| 4Mar       | - Manila cleared   |
| 20Mar      | - Mandalay captured  |
| 26Mar      | - LtGen Leese recommends an early, modified DRACULA (Rangoon)                  |
| 29Apr      | - Monsoon rains start early  |
| 2May       | - D-Day for DRACULA  |
| 3May       | - Rangoon captured   |
| 15Aug      | - End of offensive against Japan   |



# APPENDIX III

## CHAIN OF COMMAND AFTER INTEGRATION OF THE ALLIED AIR FORCES—14th DECEMBER 1943



(1) The C-in-C Eastern Fleet (and, from 22nd November, 1944, the C-in-C East Indies Fleet) was directly responsible to the Admiralty in all matters concerned with the security of the communications in the Indian Ocean both inside and outside the area of South-East Asia Command, and with offensive action against the enemy's naval forces. (See 'A', paragraph 29).

(2) The Allied Air C-in-C was directly responsible to the Air Ministry for the control of Coastal Air Forces, which were operated in accordance with the requirements of the C-in-C Eastern Fleet. (See 'A', paragraph 34).

(3) Until 21st October 1944 the posts of Deputy Supreme Allied Commander South-East Asia; Commanding General China-Burma-India theatre; Commanding General Northern Combat Area Command; and Chief of Staff to the Generalissimo, were all held by Lt.-General Solwell. Until 20th June, 1944, in his capacity as Commanding General, Northern Combat Area Command, he was under the operational control of the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Fourteenth Army. From that date until 21st October 1944 he came under the direct command of the Supreme Allied Commander.

(4) See 'A', paragraph 32.

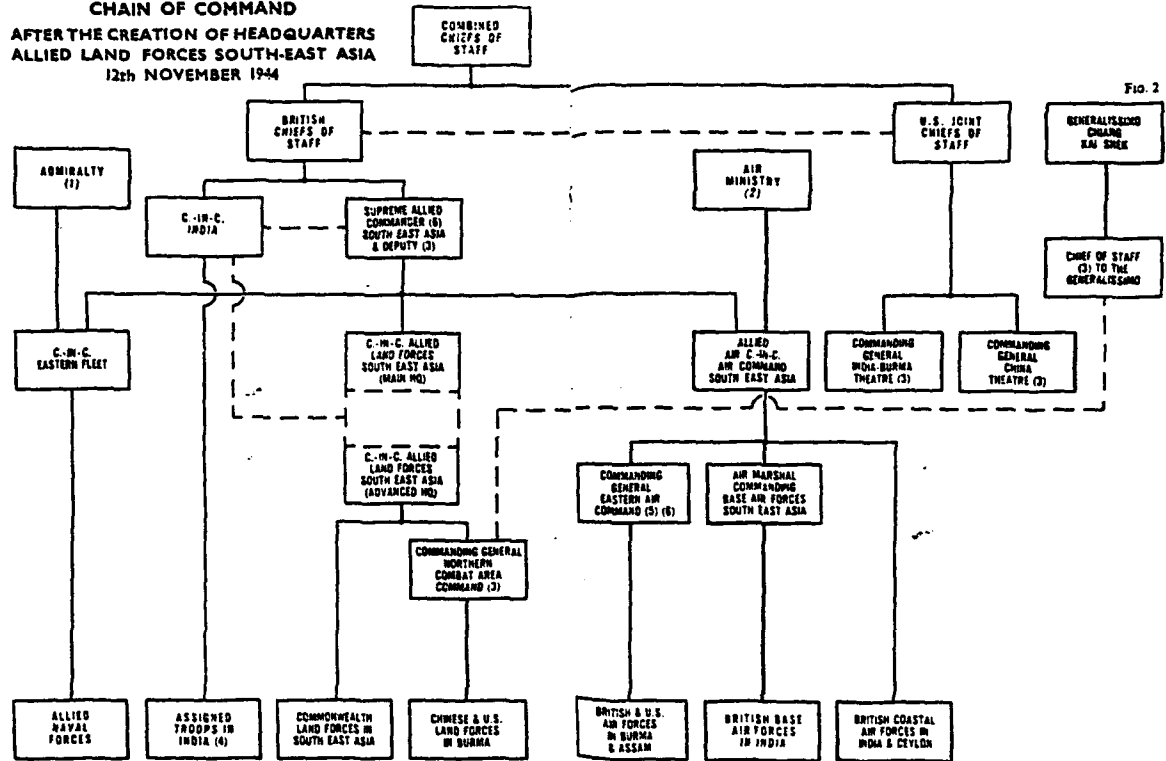
(5) The Commanding General, Eastern Air Command, besides being the Allied Air Commander for the Burma Campaign, was also responsible for the air protection of Hump operations. In all other respects these operations were controlled jointly by the Commanding-General China - Burma - India Theatre and the United States Air Transport Command. (See 'B', paragraphs 19 and 20).

(6) G.O.C.-in-C, Ceylon Army Command was under the Supreme Allied Commander through C-in-C, Ceylon (who was also under S.A.C.) for defence of Ceylon.

KEY  
DIRECT COMMAND .....  
LIAISON .....  
TEMPORARY OPERATIONAL CONTROL .....

# APPENDIX IV

## CHAIN OF COMMAND AFTER THE CREATION OF HEADQUARTERS ALLIED LAND FORCES SOUTH-EAST ASIA 12th NOVEMBER 1944



(1) See Fig. 1.

(2) See Fig. 1.

(3) Lieut-General Stilwell was recalled to the United States on the 21st October 1944. He was succeeded as Deputy Supreme Allied Commander by Lieut-General Wheeler. The China-

Burma-India theatre was divided into China (Lieut-General Wedemeyer) and India-Burma (Lieut-General Sellen) theatres. Lieut-General Wedemeyer also became Chief of Staff to the Generalissimo. Lieut-General Sellen also took over command of Northern Combat Area Command.

(4) See Fig. 1.

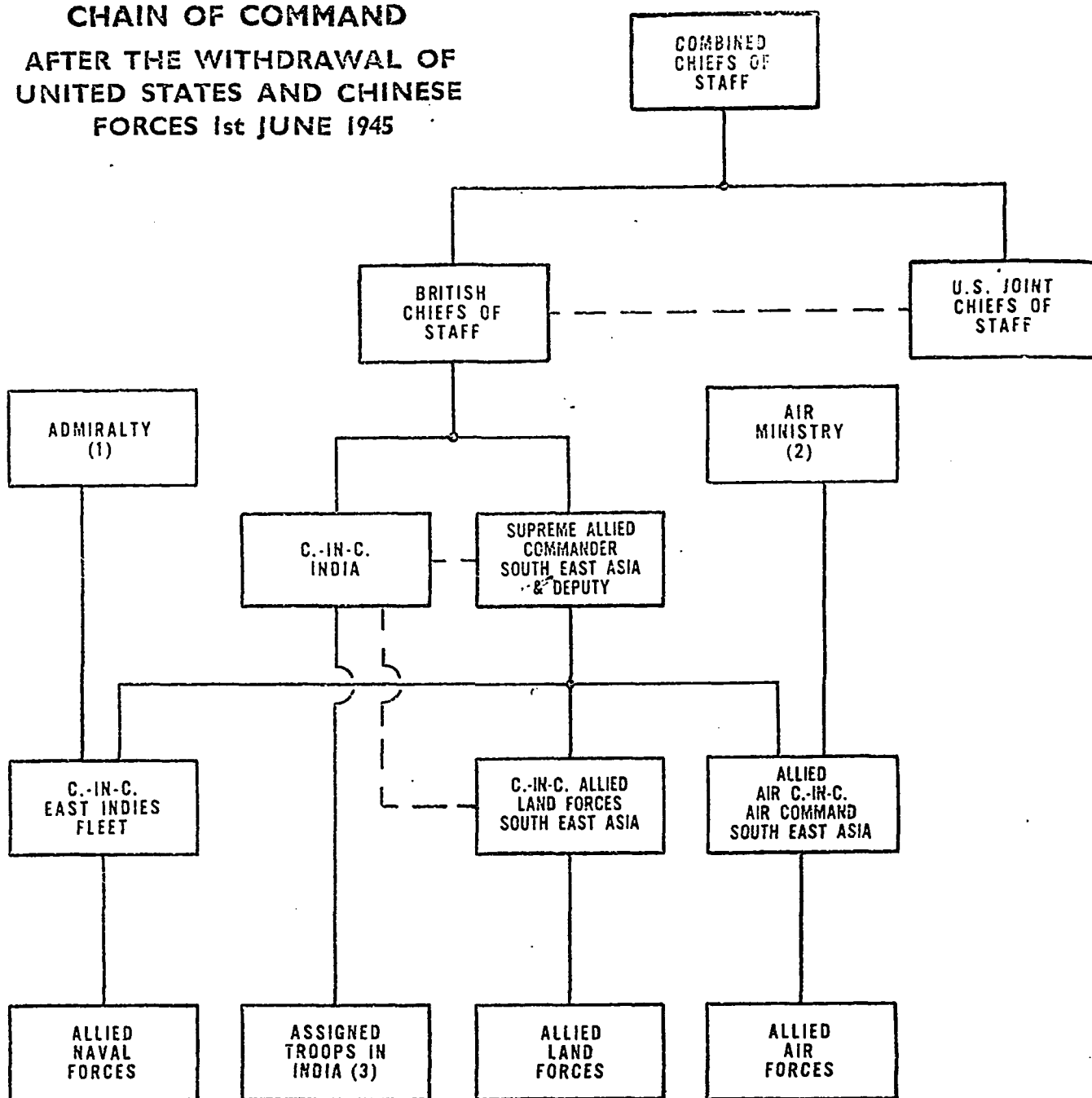
(5) See Fig. 1.

(6) During February and March 1945 the United States 20th Bomber Command of Super Fortresses (B-29) was put under the command of the Supreme Allied Commander. He delegated his authority in these matters to the Allied Air Commander-in-Chief. Operational Control of the Super Fortresses was vested in the Commanding General, Eastern Air Command.

### KEY

DIRECT COMMAND ... ———  
LIAISON ... - - - - -

**CHAIN OF COMMAND**  
**AFTER THE WITHDRAWAL OF**  
**UNITED STATES AND CHINESE**  
**FORCES 1st JUNE 1945**



(1) See Fig. 1.

(2) See Fig. 1.

(3) See 'A', paragraph 32.

**KEY**

DIRECT COMMAND ... ..

LIAISON ... ..